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III.—TÓUKVÆDHI.

AN ICELANDIC POEM FROM C. 1650.

The accompanying poem, now for the first time published, is contained in numerous paper manuscripts preserved both in Iceland and in the library of the Icelandic Literary Society at Copenhagen. The present text is transcribed from a series of manuscripts in Reykjavík, one of which states the author to have been Hallgrímur Pétursson (1614–1674), the celebrated divine and psalm-writer, to whom it is also assigned by popular report. In the biographical account of Hallgrímur Pétursson contained in vol. III of the *Hist. eccles. Isl.*,¹ where he is described as “*Omnium judicio poëta et orator eximus, cujus ingenii foetus, praesertim poëmata, quamdiu Islandia durabit, pariter durabunt,*” the list of his published works, entirely of a religious character, concludes with “*Ut et multa alia profana, quae inedita adhuc latent,*” to which class the present poem doubtless belongs.

The poem is a rhymed fable in which the *dramatis personae* are a fox—variously called *tóa*, *skolli* and *rebbi* (diminutive of *refr*),² a cock—*hani*, and a cat—*kisa*, or *ketta*. The fox trotting along the road sees a cock, whom he greets, imploring him, at the same time, to remove with his bill a straw from his eye, telling withal a plausible story as to how it had gotten there, and flattering the cock's appearance, voice, and skill as a physician. The cock, however, flies up into a tree, from where he avows his distrust in the friendly intentions of the fox, but is finally persuaded to come down by the latter, who welcomes him and quietly bites off his head. At this instant a cat comes along, who greets the fox and asks the news. The fox suggests that they hunt together, but the cat says that on the way she had seen some berries just out of reach in a high tree ;

¹ F. Johannaus. *Historia ecclesiastica Islandiae*. Havniae 1772–78.

² The fox has a multiplicity of names, as will be seen from the following verse cited in Maurer's *Isl. Volkssagen* :

Refr og hóltapórr, melrakki, dratthali, bítr,
blóðdrekk, tortrygg, lágfæta, skolli, tóa.

hereupon the fox asserts his superior strength and skill, and offers to assist in getting the berries. In the midst of the conversation dogs are heard barking and the cat climbs hastily up into the tree, from which, crouched on a limb, she sees the fox killed by the dogs, but finally manages, herself, to run home. The moral of the story stated in the last verse is in effect the Biblical aphorism of the wicked falling himself into his own pit.

LANGUAGE.

The language had already materially assumed the form characteristic of modern Icelandic. Viewed from the stand-point of classical Old Norse, the language of the poem exhibits the following universal changes:

I.—Vowel-changes.

ó with preceding *v*, representing an earlier *vá*, is shortened: *vonum* 14 *voru* 24 *svo* 29 for O. N. *vónum* (*vánum*), *vóru* (*váru*), *svó* (*svá*). *ó* is shortened in the personal pronoun *honum* 1, 14 for O. N. *hónum* (*hánum*).

i in the possessive pronouns *mínn*, *þínn*, *sínn* is shortened before *nn* and *tt*, but remains before a single *n*: *mínn* 21 *mítt* 11, 23 *sínni* 17 *sítt* 1, 8, but *mínun* 3, 18 *þínu* 2.

e, *ö* (and also *a*, *i*, *u*, *y*) are lengthened before *ng*, *nk* to *ei*, *au* (*á*, *í*, *ú*, *ý*): *skeinkt* 3 *ölfaung* 3 *gaunga* 18 *laungum* 25 for O. N. *skenkt*, *ölföng*, *gönga*, *lögum*.

Adjectives in *-ligr* and adverbs in *-liga* change the *i* to *e*: *mjúklega* 16 *fallega* 26 for O. N. *mjúkliga*, *falliga*.

Adjectives (and pronouns) in *-igr* change the *i* to *u*: *gedugum* 5 from *gedugur* for O. N. *geðigr*.

ú = negative, is everywhere replaced by *ó*: *óvart* 2 *ódygg* 10 *ólat* 21 for O. N. *úvart*, *údygg*, *úlat*.

A *u* is inserted in the new language before every *r*-final preceded in O. N. by a consonant: *gæddur* 5 *frægstur* 5 *tregur* 9 *sjálfur* 12 *daufur* 15 *kemur* 16 *grunnur* 22 for O. N. *gæddr*, *frægstr*, *tregur*, etc. This new *u* does not work umlaut, *i. e.* does not change a preceding vowel: *angur* 1 *aptur* 21 *kraptur* 21 *falskur* 29 not *öngur*, *öptur*, etc. In *fagurt* 8 the new *u* is retained throughout the flexion.

II.—*Consonant-changes.*

Old Norse *k*- and *t*-final are softened to *g* and *ð* in the following instances: (1) *k* becomes *g* in the pronouns *eg* 2, 3 etc., *mig* 4, 9 etc., *þig* 2, 9 etc., *sig* 26, in *og* (and) 3, 6 etc., and in *mjög* (very) 28 for O. N. *ek*, *mik*, *þik*, *sik*, *ok*, *mjök*; (2) *t* becomes *ð* in the pronoun *við* 19 (and *þið*) for O. N. *vīt* (*þīt*), in ntr. -að, -ið, -uð of adjectives (participles) and pronouns: *augað* 2 *það* 4, 14 etc., *galað* 8 *háað* 24, *rekið* 2 *logið* 11 for O. N. *augat*, *þat*, *galat*, etc., in *að* 2, 3 etc., as adv., prep. and conj. and its compounds for O. N. *at*.

Old Norse *rr*-final is everywhere simplified to *r*: *ber* 29 for O. N. *berr*.

j is retained before *i* where it was previously dropped: *hverjir* 11 for O. N. *hverir*.

Dual and plural of the personal pronoun coincide, the plural forms being used indiscriminately of a duality: *okkur* 12 *við* 19 are correctly used dual forms; *oss* 19 *yður* 22 are plurals used as duals.

Er 9 I, pers. sing. pres. indic. of *vera*, esse, for O. N. *em* is formed after the analogy of the other forms sing. and plur. of the indic. pres.

Tóukvæði.

1. Tóa tólti um stræti
til þess hana sá,
honum heilsar þá
bað sitt ángur bæti:
2. "Eg í augað hefi
óvart rekið strá
bið því burt¹ að ná
þig með þínu nefi.
3. Kom eg að kaupstað einum,
keypti eg ölfaung þar,
skeinkt á skálir var
mér og mínum sveinum.
4. Þá vèr þaðan fórum,
það eg ekki dyl,
þá bar þetta til,
mig eg meiddi stórum.

¹ i. e. *braut*—*brott*—*brot* finally by metathesis *bort*—*burt*.

5. Þú ert gáfum góðum
gæddur, utan skrum,
frægstur af fuglunum
með geðugum¹ gildum hljóðum.
6. Veiztu eiktir² allar
einkum morgna á
raust þín hvell og há
folk á fætur kallar.
7. Læknislist³ frábæra
lært hefir þú, er sagt,
á því hefi eg akt⁴
kongs með krónu⁵ skæra."
8. Haninn fjaðrir hristi,
hátt í eik⁶ þar sat
fagurt galað gat,
lof sitt heyra lysti:
9. "Tregur er eg að trúa
tóa mín á þig,
senn þú svíkur mig:
við heilt er bezt að búa.
10. Af því sumir segja
sèrtu faum trygg,
lymsk í lund, ódygg,
vön til vèla' að teygja."
11. "Hverjir þvætta þetta?
þeir hafa orðskemt⁷ mig,
en logið því í þig,
á bak mitt brigzlum sletta.
12. Þú munt sjálfur sanna
svikalaus trú,
kom og kyss mig nú;
gjörum okkur gamna."

¹ *geðugur*, engaging, winning. ² *eikt* i. e. *eykt*, trihorium; the sense of the line is "thou knowest all times of the day." ³ *læknislist*, medicine, the art of medicine.

⁴ *akt*, act, certificate.

⁵ *króna* = O. N. *króna*.

⁶ *eik* literally *oak*, but as is usually the case so also here generically *tree* [20, 25].

⁷ *orð-skemma*, to word-damage, slander.

13. Haninn heimskur trúði,
háleitur og gól,
hennar þóknast hól,
í skjól við skolla flúði.
14. Fór það víst að vonum,
veik sèr tóa að,
"kom þú sæll,"¹ hún kvað;
höfuð beit af honum.
15. "Aví,² ertu dauður,"
annsar³ tóa þá,
"falilalilá,⁴
beint sem bitinn sauður."
16. Þá hún er þetta að tala,
þar sem haninn lá,
kemur kisa þá,
mjúklega tók að mala.
17. Heilsar systur sinni
svipljót kisa þá,
frèttir mörgu frá,
grett í gráu skinni.
18. "Alt var heilt á hófi
heima á mínum stað";
tas-vig tóa kvað,
þreytt af gaungu þófi :
19. "Við skulum frænka⁵ fara
að fá oss villibráð,"
það fær kisa tjáð :
"eg mun ei það spara.
20. Fann-eg á fúrnum vegi
fagra eik og há,
uxu⁶ ber þar á,
en þeim náði' eg eigi."
21. Annsar rebbi aptur :
"ólat kann ég ráð ;
fæ eg fljótt þeim náð,
minn er meiri kraptur.

¹ *kom þú sæll* = "welcome!" the usual address to one who comes. ² Interjection. ³ i. e. *ansar* [21]. ⁴ Interjection. ⁵ i. e. *frækna*. ⁶ For older *óxu* [*uóxu*].

22. Á því er mèt grunur,
að yður sè meira veitt,
en eg kann ei utan eitt;
það er mikill munur.
23. En ef ráð mitt eina
orkar meira' en þín,
það er meining mín,
þá skal þetta reyna."
24. Sem það voru að segja
sín á milli tvær
hóað heyrðu þær;
hvellir hundar geya.
25. Ketta klærnar þandi
klyfrar¹ hátt í eik,
laungum lymisk í leik,
laus frá lífsins grandí.
26. Hún sig þar upp halar;
hundar tóu ná,
—fallega fór hún þá—
drepín var án dvalar.
27. Kisa upp á kvisti
köldum spent var móð,
ýlgð og stuttleit stóð,
hala og eyrun hristi.
28. Hrædd var mjög við hunda
í hnipri saman lá;
fèkk því færi á
heim til húsa að skunda.
29. Er það einginn vafi,
einatt² svo við ber,
"falskur sjálfum sèr
grefur gröf, þó grafi."

WILLIAM HOWARD CARPENTER.

¹ i. e. *klífrar*.² i. e. *einart*.